

## EUROPE'S BORDERS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD: GOVERNMENTALITY AND IDENTITY

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**Abstract:** This article argues that the EU's neighbourhood policy is deeply entrenched in the Eurocentric spatial imaginaries of the EU as the universal core of and pole of attraction to its neighbours. This is especially clear in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership (EaP) concept of an asymmetrical partnership and neighbourhood. The ENP and EaP constituted the EU as a fully European core, while simultaneously othering its neighbourhood as not-fully European with an uncertain status of being between the inside and outside. This article attempts to expose how the ENP and EaP's practices draw a border for the EU/Europe and its neighbourhood with the use of specific EU policy instruments, which are not just technical or professional tools. To the contrary, these instruments hold some potential power in constituting and envisioning the EU's closest outside neighbours. This article will move beyond application-oriented research and draw on critical social theory, especially the already-existing governmentality research as well as Michel Foucault's theory of power. The article concludes with the exposed mechanisms of constructing the political and cultural space of neighbourhood (and ultimately Europe too) through the ENP and EaP's governmental rationalities of their border practices.

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### Introduction

The ongoing crisis over Ukraine (Kushnir, 2018) and the current influx of refugees (Anderson, 2014; Carr, 2015; De Genova, 2017; McDoland-Gibson, 2016) have raised several questions regarding Europe's borders and the limits of EU soft power. Viewed from the perspective of the European Union, the refugee crisis is additional proof of the EU's unstable neighbourhood. Indeed, it can hardly be claimed that the EU's imagined space of 'neighbourhood' is currently more secure and better governed than a decade ago. Instead of creating *the ring of friends* with prosperous and well-governed countries, the EU's neighbourhood has, in fact, experienced more instability since the end of the Cold War, mainly in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Arguably, this instability may indicate more about the EU and the failure of the European Neighbourhood Policy's (ENP) instruments than the neighbours' capacity to be prosperous and peaceful – or to put it in the ENP's rhetoric – 'resilient'. Therefore, in this current context, it is crucial to examine the reconfiguration of Europe's borders, which has been presupposed to be in the ENP rather than informing the applied practice of this policy, which most of the dominant and voluminous policy-oriented research on the ENP still does. It is also relevant to consider the noticeable input, if any, that critical social theory research can bring to the mainstream discussion on Europe's borders and neighbourhood; Zimmermann and Favell note that most of the critical scholarship on Europe *goes largely unheard* (2011; 490-491).

### Critical European Studies and Governmentality

Concerning the problem of Europe's borders, Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality (Burchell et al., 1991; Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1994, 1999; Barry et al., 1996; Walters and Haahr, 2005; Walters, 2012; Rose and Miller, 2010) offers *a critical political analysis* as it allows one to ask several unconventional questions, such as *how* Europe and its borders and neighbourhood are being imagined, *how* they are being governed by the ENP, and *how* neighbouring countries are imagined, governed or governing themselves with the ENP and EaP (Eastern Partnership). Governmentality — as a type of critical political analysis — directs our attention to *governmental rationalities* and therefore analyses how different mentalities or ways of thinking express political problems. Similarly, geographical analogies and spatial imaginaries may also constitute an important part of *governmental rationality*.

Certain ways of imagining spaces or borders as a form of mentality or a specific way of thinking can then be seen as a particular form of governmental rationality. According to Rose and Miller (2010), governmental rationality defines what M. Foucault calls the *problematization* of politics. Governance always revolves around certain problems, policies or practices, which are based on certain mentalities and forms of reason. Accordingly, critical governmentality scholarship can identify the original *thought, mentality, rationality, geographical analogies* or *political imaginaries* in political practice, which lay

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the foundation for each political practice or policy. From this perspective, these political practices or policies are never *just* technical and neutral tools but include critical power relations.

Hence, this article contributes to the emerging field of Critical European Studies, which premise is that investigating political phenomena in the EU/Europe requires an understanding of human actions. It focuses on analysing cultural forms of political life such as beliefs, meanings, imaginations, languages and traditions, and perceives them as indispensable elements in constructing specific forms of social and political life, in addition it examines the power relations and identity constructs. It heavily draws from the broad constructivist, interpretive and critical tradition of political analysis.

### **Imagining Europe's Borders and Neighbourhood**

The main *governmental rationality* of the ENP and EaP refers to a concept of Europe's border that is constructed by utilizing the deep-seated opposition between Europe and the Orient (Said, 1979) and between Europe and Eastern Europe (Wolff, 1994; Bakić-Hayden, 1995; Neumann, 1999). The ENP and EaP clearly invoked this concept of Europe (the West) in which it is represented as advanced, modern and rational and in which progress, liberty and civilization are embodied. In this context, this type of thinking is manifested by the idea that the European Union is a normative power (Zielonka 2001, 2013; Manners, 2002; Whitman and Wolff, 2010). As this article argues, this thinking is also manifested by a structural asymmetry between the EU and its neighbours in the ENP and EaP. Therefore, Europe's identity needs the image of *the other* to constitute the border between Europe and non-Europe, and the border with the East or the Orient has played a significant role in Europe's othering practices. *The East-West distinction was always related to the experience of the Eastern border as a 'frontier'. Simultaneously, Eastern Europe acts as the second frontier of Europe. In the narrations of this frontier, the 'second other' of Europe was constructed* (Eder, 2006: 264). Therefore, Eastern Europe has always been placed in the Western imaginaries of the space between Europe and the Orient as never fully European yet never entirely other and oriental. Eastern Europe was also imagined as *Europe's past, a past that the West had overcome, and a zone of war and nationalism that was stuck in history* (Diez, 2004: 326). Consequently, Europe not only presents itself as superior to its own *Other* but also attributes to itself the civilizing power of bringing 'peace and prosperity' to its own *Other*. As Olivier Kramsch argues, there is *an analogy between ENP and earlier rounds of European imperial expansion* because of the apparent parallels between them in *envisioning the world "beyond" Europe* (Kramsch, 2011: 195). Hartmut Behr refers to the concept of arbitrary "standards of civilization" that was developed by Western European nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which he argues was decisive in the recognition of non-European nations as "civilized" (Behr, 2007: 240).

Concerning the ENP and EaP, this othering practice allows the EU to question the European credentials of its neighbours. This questioning appears to be much easier with its Mediterranean partners, such as in the case of Morocco, whose application to the EU was dismissed in the 1980s because it *was not* a European country. This historical case — especially because Morocco is part of the ENP — challenges the current idea of normative Europe and the concept of 'shared values' that was premised by the ENP. As Ben Tonra asks, *how then can an application for accession from Morocco be dismissed without consideration of the country's adherence to those common values?* (Tonra, 2010: 62). By employing Orientalising logic, the ENP's *governmental rationalities* can conveniently exclude its southern neighbours from being fully European.

It has been much more difficult to dismiss the European credentials of Eastern European countries such as Ukraine. However, especially in the case of the Eastern Partnership, there seems to be a clear reproduction of the *Eastern Europe* discourse in which Eastern Europe is designated as part of Europe because of its geography but is still in the process of becoming fully 'European'. This binary opposition entails the long-established specific arbitrary meanings of 'Eastness' that are associated with 'Orientalising practices', which was most famously analysed by Edward Said and Larry Wolff. Invoking the figure of *Eastern Europe* and attributing the Orientalising logic to the Eastern Partnership allows the EU to prevent its *eastern* neighbours from claiming full *Europeanness*. The ENP and EaP practices involve an arbitrary 'civilizational scale' on which *Eastern* countries are imagined as 'always' lagging behind Europe and that without Europe's help, would always remain underdeveloped, 'not yet' European, 'not yet' modern and 'not fully' rational. This imagining of Europe's borders exerted a significant influence on the development of the EaP and ENP, especially because it laid the foundation

for understanding the idea of 'neighbourhood' and 'partnership'. In the end, this imagining also determined a formulation of the ill-conceived conception of this 'neighbourhood' and 'partnership'.

### **European Identity of Neighbourhood in Question**

Many scholars have already emphasized several ambiguities and limitations that relate to the concepts of 'neighbourhood' and 'partnership' (Cianciara, 2017; Creamona and Hillion, 2006; Forsberg and Haukkala, 2018; Geoffrey, 2008; Korosteleva, 2011, Bialasiewicz et al., 2009; Schumacher, 2015; Whitman and Wolff, 2010). When designing the ENP and EaP, the EU must have imagined itself as being simultaneously at the centre and the pole of attraction of its external milieu. This imagining constitutes a very specific gradation of 'civilization', which can be traced back to the Enlightenment era (Wolff, 1994) and was also clearly present during the Eastern Enlargement (Kuus, 2004, 2007; Behr, 2007; Clark and Jones, 2011; Grzymiski, 2009; Hagen, 2003). With this gradation, the EU is imagined as a core and 'idealized Europe', and Central Europe is imagined as always closer to an idealized Europe (for example, the new post-communist EU members) than Eastern Europe (for example, the countries that are embraced by the EaP) although it is still half way toward being Europe; Eastern Europe is closer than some Balkan states and Russia, but they nevertheless lag behind Central Europe. As a result, the EU, through the political practices of the ENP and EaP, imagines itself as the 'fully European' core and essence of Europe, but simultaneously, Eastern Europe and the Northern African Arab countries that are embraced by the ENP and EaP are viewed as 'not-yet-fully European' countries. This logic seems to underpin the conception of 'neighbourhood' that is embedded in the ENP and EaP. Therefore, clearly conflicting spatial and geographical categories are being applied to ENP and EaP countries. This conflicting application raises the question of whether these countries are imagined by the EU as European neighbours of the EU or as neighbours of Europe, where in this logic, 'Europe' is equated to the EU. Hence, in the context of analysing the problem of Europe's borders one could ask if the EU is striving to establish – in its own view – the border for 'Europe' or just for the EU itself.

In this sense, the political practices of the Eastern EU enlargement (2004/7/13) and the Eastern Partnership parallel one other. It is as if they were both based on varying degrees of Europeanness and Eastness with the categorization of the EU as the 'fully European' core and Eastern Europe as 'not-yet-fully European' (Kuus, 2004; Moisiu, 2007; Williams, 2007; Grzymiski, 2009, 2011). Similarly, we can also assume that there are some parallels of power relations and representational frameworks between the EU Eastern enlargement (2004/7/13) and the Eastern Partnership. In both cases, the identity narratives in almost all new post-communist EU member states, including Poland, frame the eastern border of the particular state as the *eastern* border of Europe. This frame conveniently excludes the EaP countries from being part of the fully 'European' Europe. The ENP and EaP's logic resembles the EU's accession conditions in the Eastern Enlargement in 2004/7/13. Ulrich Sedelmeier and Frank Schimmelfennig refer to this process as *governance through enlargement* (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004: 6). Accordingly, in the ENP and EaP, political practices and their *governmental rationality* are based on the idea of *governing through neighbourhood*. The ENP and EaP represent the type of soft power instrument through which the EU wants to gently enforce the implementation of its own 'rules and regulations' beyond its territory to ensure its own security. Hence, one can conclude that the ENP and EaP *governmental rationalities* are deeply entrenched in the Eurocentric spatial imaginaries of the EU as the universal core of and pole of attraction to its neighbours.

### **Governmentalization of Europe's borders**

This article employs the governmentality approach and addresses how neighbouring ENP and EaP countries were made knowable and governable as *Eastern* or *neighbouring* social, economic and political spaces that lagged behind European norms and values. In this vein, we can recast the re-bordering practices of the EU in the larger study of the *governmentalization of Europe*. In this context, Foucault does not perceive power as a static possession of one dominant group that is exercised over an oppressed group. He identifies several transformations of forms of power, which are historically placed, and at the same time, they are rare and contingent (Veyne, 1997). He contrasted governmentality with other forms of power such as sovereign, pastoral and disciplinary power. Examining politics and power through the governmentality lens allows us to expose the changing forms and logic of power. For example, Foucault discusses the *governmentalization of the state*, whereas Walters and Haahr recast the history of European integration in terms of the *governmentalization of Europe* (Walters and Haahr,

2005: 10). These scholars seek to answer how Europe was made knowable and governable as a space for social, economic and political processes.

As Merje Kuus claims, the EU has the *power of conceptualization* over its neighbours, which is manifested in *the capacity of the EU institutions to take the union's immediate exterior as their object of management and turn that space into 'neighborhood' as a specific kind of place to be managed through a particular set of policy instruments* (Kuus, 2014: 114). The power of conceptualization allows experts, bureaucrats and academics to codify both knowledge and power over the EU's vicinity. Elites exercise what Clark and Jones call *elite spatialising political practices* (Clark and Jones, 2011: 291). According to them, political elites use spatial concepts in a specific socio-political context to achieve their strategic goals and increase their own legitimacy. Their approach allows us to ask *how* spatial concepts are mobilized by elites and in what historical settings they are used. This approach gives us a more actor-based perspective for critical research, including the governmentality perspective.

Through its power of conceptualization – and in particular, the EU elites, such as the European Commission's experts and professionals – the EU makes its neighbours knowable and governable by manipulating the concept of Europe's borders. Neighbours' political, social and economic positions are imagined through varying degrees of Europeanness with a blurred inside-outside distinction. In the ENP and EaP's logic, the application of the EU's rules and regulations is closely linked to the EU by acquiring a 'European' identity from its neighbours. If, for example, Armenia, Moldova or Ukraine meet the EU criteria, which are, regardless of the partnership rhetoric, unilaterally set by the EU itself, they may expect to qualify for the *European league*. This qualification, in turn, depends on their degree of assimilation to the EU's 'rules and regulations', which blurs the previously sharp inside-outside logic that underpins the crucial element of the ENP and EaP where 'neighbours' are assessed by the gradation of democracy and Europeanness. The boundary is reflected by the specific 'civilizational scale' — more or less democratic/European, fully or not yet democratic/European — where 'more democratic' is equated to 'more European'. The EU appropriates the concept of 'Europe' with the rhetorical tool of synecdoche and treats itself as the essence of 'Europe' (Böröcz and Kovaács, 2001: 8). If neighbouring states, despite being geographically European, are to become 'more European', they must accept the EU's 'rules and regulations', which in the end, are the benchmark of these countries' willingness to become 'more European'. The EU offers its assistance in the implementation of 'advanced reforms' through relevant incentives so that its Eastern or Mediterranean neighbours can become 'more European' and as European as the EU. However, the EU ultimately determines the degree of a neighbouring country's Europeanness. Hence, the political practices of the ENP and EaP seem to constitute a new pattern of Europe's borders with simultaneous exclusiveness and inclusiveness although it maintains – most importantly – the hard border regime (Schengen).

Accordingly, this article argues that there is a duality of borders in 'Europe' that constitutes the crucial element of the ENP and EaP's governmental rationality. Gerard Delanty states that European borders are characterized by alternating hard and soft forms on one axis and open and closed forms on another axis (Delanty, 2006). In this context, there is no sharp inside-outside (*soft borders*) distinction, given the promise of the ENP to *avoid drawing new dividing lines* after the Eastern Enlargement in 2004; at the same time, there is the tangible Schengen border (*hard borders*). As Ruben Zaiotti notes, since its inception, the ENP has been affected by the *Gated Community Syndrome*, which is centred on the Schengen culture of internal security (Zaiotti, 2007: 153) that also has far-reaching implications for the outside space. *What lies outside the fence is a potential threat and thus should be treated with suspicion. At the same time, members of the community are keen to maintain friendly relations with their neighbours [...] partly from a sense of courtesy, and partly from the recognition that neighbours might be very helpful in managing (and possibly preventing) potential threats from getting to the community's gates* (Zaiotti, 2007: 144). As a result, although borders are presented by the EU as *soft*, there is a significant persistence of *hard border* practices, such as visa regimes, border controls and asylum regulations for 'partners' and 'neighbours'. Several scholars such as Neumann (1998), Zielonka, (2001) and Diez, (2006) identify this paradoxical EU logic and trace it back to the enlargement process before 2004. As Zielonka concludes, *Enlargement is basically about inclusion, while the hard borders regime is basically about exclusion. Enlargement is about overcoming the division of Europe, while the hard border regime is about creating or recreating dividing lines in Europe* (Zielonka, 2001: 524). The issue becomes even more paradoxical if we recall that the ENP is *not* about enlargement, because it excludes

the prospect of membership for the countries that are adjacent to the current EU. Therefore, in the ENP and EaP, the EU presents its borders as *soft* — partially open but never entirely open — although it simultaneously maintains many elements of *hard* border practices, especially if there is a *risk* of neighbours who physically cross the EU Schengen borders. This contradiction has been dramatically manifested in the refugee crisis that peaked in the summer of 2015 (Pachocka, 2015; Vaughan-Williams, 2015).

## Conclusions

There is certainly a further need to investigate the simultaneous processes of the construction of a neighbourhood and the construction of Europe as a result of the ENP and EaP policies by referring to the governmentality approach within the framework of Critical European Studies. This article is a tentative attempt for future and more comprehensive research on the *governmental rationalities* of the border practices of the ENP, EaP, Schengen and already looming new neighbourhood policy in the aftermath of the refugee crisis. More research is needed that will include actor-based perspectives and that will be based on in-depth interviews with professionals and experts in the European Commission and national governments that manage the neighbourhood policy. This issue is especially currently relevant in the context of the border crisis, the weakening of the EU's soft power, as the EU is now revising its neighbourhood policy.

This article argued that the ENP and EaP *governmental rationalities* are deeply entrenched in the Eurocentric spatial imaginaries of Europe as the universal core of and pole of attraction to its neighbours. This entrenchment is especially clear in the ENP and EaP's concept of an asymmetrical partnership and neighbourhood. The ENP and EaP constituted the EU as a fully European core, while simultaneously *othering* its neighbourhood as not-fully European with an uncertain status of being between the inside and outside.

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